



Tibetan Minzu Market

The Intersection of Ethnicity and Commodity

Brox, Trine

Published in:
Asian Ethnicity

DOI:
[10.1080/14631369.2015.1013175](https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2015.1013175)

Publication date:
2017

Document version
Peer reviewed version

Document license:
[Other](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Brox, T. (2017). Tibetan Minzu Market: The Intersection of Ethnicity and Commodity. *Asian Ethnicity*, 18(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2015.1013175>

Tibetan *minzu* market: the intersection of ethnicity and commodity

Trine Brox*

Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

In downtown Chengdu a pocket of Tibetan culture has sprung up: a Tibetan market where Tibetans and Han Chinese meet to buy and sell ethnic minority products. Pointing to how Tibetan migration to Chengdu has contributed to the growth of a vibrant ‘*minzu* market’ attracting Tibetan and Han Chinese merchants, customers, Buddhist devotees, and voyeurs, this article presents novel understandings of the ethnic goods market in urban Chengdu. The article first explores the growth of the market, which is the result of a history of political and economic reforms, increased mobility, and religious revival. Second, it maps the market infrastructure according to the ethnicity of the shopkeepers and the commodities that are traded. Although there is still a clear ethnic division in the market, this article also documents the emergence of Han Chinese market participation in forms of trade that have historically been dominated by Tibetans.

Keywords: China; ethnicity; market; migration; *minzu*; Tibetans

Introduction

Chengdu, with a population of 14 million, is the prosperous and bustling capital of Sichuan Province. It is situated in southwestern China, east of the Tibetan plateau, and shares a border with Kham, the eastern part of ethnographic Tibet.¹ In the downtown district Wuhou there is a Tibetan neighborhood. It is formed around a market that is the result of rapid socioeconomic development, increased mobilization, religious revival, and the formation of ethnic enclaves through urbanization. The market is characterized by a pronounced Tibetan aesthetics and an overwhelming number of shops selling Tibetan Buddhist paraphernalia: more than 200 shops of either Han Chinese or Tibetan ownership equip monasteries, temples, and altars in Tibetan and Han Chinese homes in China, India, Singapore, and even all the way to the United States.

The topic of this article is the growth and composition of the market, but with a particular focus on one aspect – ethnicity. A first observation is that migration to Chengdu by a single ethnic group (Chi.: *minzu*), Tibetans, is contributing to the growth of a vibrant ‘*minzu* market’. Second, the overwhelming majority of the businesses at the market deal with ‘*minzu* commodities’ (Chi.: *minzu shangpin*) or ‘*minzu* items’ (Chi.: *minzu yongpin*) that purportedly are connected to Tibetan culture. The umbrella term *minzu*, variously translated as ‘nation’, ‘minority group’, or ‘ethnic group’,² is a political classification that encompasses the Han Chinese majority and the 55 officially recognized ethnic minority groups inhabiting the vast territory of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).³ Each of these ethnic groups is defined by a common language, territory,

*Email: trinebrox@hum.ku.dk

culture, and economy, all of which are perceived as objective and measurable parameters for judging inclusion in and exclusion from these groups. Although having particular *minzu* characteristics, in official discourse all of these groups also concurrently belong to the greater, all-inclusive category of *zhonghua minzu*, a pan-Chinese identity and nation. However, ethnic minorities in China are the object of both exoticism and fear, and especially in the western regions they are targets of distinct policies aimed at integrating them into the motherland and at preventing ethnic conflicts that could potentially threaten political stability and prevent multiethnic harmony.⁴ As for Tibetans, the local nationalism identified with them and the allegations that they are marginalized within the PRC have made them a highly politically sensitive *minzu*. In light of this, it is fascinating that they have created a Tibetan neighborhood and market on urban Han Chinese territory, where they are overtly manifesting their Tibetan-ness and materially prospering from trade in *minzu* products. It has developed into a vibrant ethnic minority market attracting Tibetan and Han Chinese merchants, Buddhist devotees, and voyeurs of *minzu* culture.

Neighborhoods defined by shared ethnic identity have been explored elsewhere as shantytowns and ghettos with their own shadow economies and their own laws; as enclosed enclave economies based upon co-ethnic networks; and as ethnic spectacles, theme parks, and other imagined places built for ethnic tourism and voyeurism.⁵ In contrast, in this article I treat the Tibetan neighborhood in Wuhou as a commercial space because this is where Tibetans do their shopping and trade their goods. This Tibetan *minzu* market was not orchestrated by the local government to display and make profit from commodifying and displaying Tibetan ethnicity, as we have seen in theme parks and faux ethnic villages around China.⁶ Conversely, I am not claiming that Tibetans have taken their ethnicity to the marketplace (as explored in other contexts⁷): it is not their ethnicity that is for sale. The market evolved out of a new mobility and new opportunities to practice their religion, and it has come to represent Tibetan ethnicity. This article will demonstrate how the market was formed by Tibetans and caters to their own, but also that, although it is identified as Tibetan, the market is not an exclusive and enclosed ethnic economy from which non-Tibetans are barred.

The data presented have been generated through an approach that mixes qualitative and quantitative methods. The history of the market has been investigated through interviews and, to a lesser extent, reports by Chinese scholars. The map of the market is based on information gathered through a survey and through participant observation on several occasions over the course of five months in 2010, 2012, and 2013. I was the ignorant tourist visiting an ethnic culture attraction – mostly alone, but at other times accompanied by my Han Chinese assistant, my Tibetan assistant, or my Danish husband. Once I walked these streets together with four professors from the nearby Southwest University of Nationalities. With deliberate naiveté and curiosity, I chatted with the shopkeepers and asked my many questions.⁸ The Han Chinese shopkeepers' welcomes varied from friendly greetings of '*ni hao*' as I entered their shop to wariness and foot-dragging. The Tibetan shopkeepers at times feigned ignorance or pretended not to understand, but at other times met me with courtesy and candor, extended invitations to learn more about them and their community, and invited me to visit temples and factories. Furthermore, together with three assistants, I have systematically mapped all the businesses located in these streets. I counted 472 businesses whose façades front the main streets constituting the market, and I have made a map of these storefronts. Additionally, my assistants personally visited 401 shops in 2010

and asked the proprietors or shopkeepers questions following a standard questionnaire that I developed. For each shop, the following data were collected: the name, address, and age of the business; the nationality, gender, and hometown of the owner; the number of employees and their nationalities; and finally the kind of commodities that it dealt with. I cross-checked and updated these data in 2012 and 2013. Neither the number of hostels and dormitories, nor the number of hidden businesses tucked away in the backstreets has been recorded. My assistants conducted in-depth interviews in either Tibetan or Mandarin with several business owners and shopkeepers – one of Hui nationality, three Han Chinese, and eight Tibetans. Four Tibetan entrepreneurs – three male and one female – were interviewed twice.

The results of this multimodal investigation into the market's history and its composition anno 2010–2013 suggest novel understandings of the *minzu* goods market in Chengdu and represent an attempt to eradicate a blind spot that thus far has only been addressed in a news item by the Tibet Information Network⁹ and a handful of Chinese reports that strictly adhere to the official narrative of the city as a multiethnic meeting place.¹⁰ Even within the PRC's self-serving identification as a multiethnic country, ethnicity is a salient dimension in the politics of stratification, and the main finding of this article is that ethnicity is also an important dividing line in the market. The first part of the article explores how this neighborhood evolved into a Tibetan territory by way of changing policies effecting market reforms and religious revival, and by Tibetan migrants seizing the territory and transforming it into a Tibetan market catering to the needs of Tibetans. The second part of the article maps the market infrastructure and its storefront enterprises according to the origin of the shopkeepers and the commodities that they trade. The aim is to shed light upon the relationship between *minzu* movement, *minzu* markets, and patterns of ethnic division.

From *minzu* migration to *minzu* market

In the Tibetan context, urbanization has been framed within the hegemonic discourse that understands modernization as urbanization.¹¹ Still, as pointed out by Emily T. Yeh and Mark Henderson, urbanization has different interpretations even within this discourse. Of the two major factions claiming to represent the Tibetans politically, those supporting the official Chinese version see urbanization as something positive, whereas those taking the official exile-Tibetan version see it as something negative. Migration, of course, plays a vital role in the development of urban China: the official Chinese discourse promotes Han Chinese migration into Tibetan areas as beneficial to the Tibetans because the Han Chinese supposedly carry with them expertise, language skills, market networks, and higher education. In contrast, exile-Tibetan voices depict urbanization in Tibet as the unwanted result of Han Chinese migrants swarming in and displacing Tibetans in their own homeland.¹² Several scholarly studies on the social consequences of extensive, state-led socioeconomic development in Tibet have also focused on the development-as-urbanization paradigm and reveal the negative impact of urban Han Chinese immigration into Tibetan autonomous areas and intraregional, rural-urban Tibetan migration. Despite the obvious economic achievements and improved living conditions of urban Tibetans, these studies are concerned with the marginalization of ethnic Tibetans (both urban and rural) resulting from the state's development scheme that interprets modernization as urbanization, as a result of which the in-migrating Han Chinese labor migrants have come to outnumber Tibetans in

urban Tibet.¹³ The most dominant migrant group is from Sichuan, and according to Yeh, their presence is so overwhelming in terms of both numbers and economic activities that the Sichuan migrants call Lhasa ‘Little Sichuan’, and the Lhasa Tibetans feel they are being swamped.¹⁴ Among the problems with the state’s emphasis on urbanization in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is the resulting social inequalities caused by uneven ethnic minority representation in urban state-sector employment.¹⁵ There is a growing disparity between Tibetans and Han Chinese immigrants, but apart from divisions created along ethnic lines, Tibetans have also been divided into separate classes. Thus, we can identify not only a rural–urban divide, but also intra-urban inequality: a wealthy urban Tibetan class and a poor urban Tibetan underclass.¹⁶

With the fixation upon Tibetan rural-urban migration and Han immigration into Tibetan autonomous areas, however, we know little about the Tibetans’ migration eastward into urban Han Chinese territory. One main reason why few studies have documented *minzu* movement and *minzu* migration is the political sensibilities involved and the problem of counting. Although the traits, acts, and movements of members of *minzu* certainly must be monitored and registered in state statistics, these data are not made available to the public. This means that the numbers are lacking altogether in the few studies on Tibetans’ movements,¹⁷ and that the studies on the movements of other ethnic minorities and Han Chinese into Tibetan areas are based on questionable statistics.¹⁸ Nevertheless, although exact numbers on Tibetan movements are lacking, we know that they travel. Similar to other Chinese migrants from poverty-stricken areas, Tibetans move where they can find jobs to secure their economic survival, and it is common for individual members of Tibetan households to ‘go for income’, even if it means going outside of their registered residency.¹⁹ But as Childs, Goldstein, and Wangdui have argued, although there is permanent migration to urban areas, the majority of migrant laborers return to their villages and contribute to the rural household economy.²⁰ In Chengdu, we furthermore find prosperous Tibetans – the cadres, business elite, and others from the upper end of the income spectrum who move to improve their lifestyles and their opportunities. Compared to Tibetan areas – with their inferior services and peripheral status – Chengdu is desirable to Tibetans as a place to shop, make money, and settle temporarily or permanently.

The growth of a Tibetan market in Chengdu

Chengdu, as the gateway into Tibet, has long held an important position for Tibetans, but there was no Wuhou Tibetan market there before Tibet’s incorporation into the PRC in 1950.²¹ That very same year, the Southwest University of Nationalities was established in the Wuhou District. Ethnic minority cadres and intellectuals were trained there, and Tibetans settled in the area around the university campus. The opening of the People’s Government Liaison Office of the TAR in Wuhouci Bystreet, as well as a hospital and a hostel, attracted more Tibetans to the neighborhood. It developed into a center for trade, and since they now had institutions and accommodation in Wuhou, the foundation for a Tibetan neighborhood was laid. At the beginning of the 1980s, the main goods traded there were not religious or *minzu* goods, but basic necessities such as rice, vegetables, and cotton that were transported to Tibet. Thus, in this first phase of market development, Wuhou was a distribution base from where the goods needed in Tibet were transported.

A second development phase commenced with the Reform and Opening Up (Chi.: *gaige kaifang*) policies launched in 1978, and which led to economic modernization including decollectivization, privatization of businesses, eased restrictions upon cross-regional movement, and Deng Xiaopeng's encouragement to the Chinese to get rich.²² Tibetans were allowed to move around more freely, and they came along the Sichuan-Tibetan highway from neighboring Tibetan areas of Kardze (Chi.: Ganzi) and Ngaba (Chi.: Aba). They traded their handicrafts in Wuhou, where they by this time had friends, family, and connections. Networks and assistance at the destination are essential for migration in China, and in Wuhou, Tibetans moving eastward could find such a network. Apart from increased ease of mobility, economic liberalization in the 1980s also led to the rapid development of urban free markets, as people could open private businesses and be self-employed.

Moreover, the new and more tolerant political environment was accompanied by changes in religious policy introduced in the so-called Document 19, released in 1982.²³ The central government's all-China policy concerning religion changed from banning, prosecuting, and destroying religion to showing more leniency and allowing freedom of religion in the sense that the state respects the freedom of the individual to believe whatever she/he wants. Although it was not a policy aimed particularly at Tibetans, it had direct consequences for Tibetans, who were now able to take their faith into the public sphere and revive Tibetan Buddhism. This resurrection took concrete material forms: Tibetans started constructing and redecorating Tibetan Buddhist monasteries; erecting prayer flags, prayer wheels, and *mani* walls; reviving devotional practices such as incense burning, pilgrimage, prostrations, and circumambulation; copying, printing, and distributing religious texts; and making and restoring religious icons, among other activities.²⁴ The practices of patronizing monasteries and *lamas* and giving material offerings to temples, monasteries, and individual monks all created a substantial demand for religious goods. Such religious revival contributed in an important way to the formation of the Tibetan market in Chengdu – it evolved from being a distribution base for necessities in demand in Tibet into a market where religious goods were traded. Moreover, because of economic reforms, people had more disposable income that they could spend on religion, for example, by sponsoring local temples and *lamas*. Non-Tibetan patronage of Tibetan Buddhist *lamas* also increased,²⁵ and it became possible to finance the resurrection of Tibetan Buddhism with help from the government. With the increasing number of Tibetan businessmen trading in religious commodities in this area, they began to set up shops in the area around the intersection of Wuhouci Bystreet (Chi: *Wuhouci hengjie*) and the Ximianqiao Bystreet (Chi: *Ximian qiao henjie*) in the mid-1980s.

Several interlocutors have pointed out that the market grew naturally and outside of state control. The state has attempted to control and manage it, but in reality it is the Tibetans who established the market and who are managing it. However, sometime in the late 1980s, the government acknowledged that it was there and put it on the city map as a formalized market and an exotic ethnic neighborhood. The development of the Tibetan market accelerated at the beginning of the 1990s, and it expanded from the original Wuhouci Bystreet to Ximianqiao Bystreet and Wuhouci East Street (Chi: *Wuhouci dongjie*). It became the most popular place for Tibetans to run their errands. The influx of Tibetan migrants to Chengdu exploded when the Kangding Hotel opened there in 2001, and a third phase of growth commenced. The religious goods market had become profitable and attracted both Tibetans and non-Tibetans. The market developed into a *minzu*

market that (while continuing to sell religious goods) now also had curio shops aimed at tourists and voyeurs of *minzu* culture. 230

In short, the Tibetan *minzu* market in Chengdu emerged from policy changes that affected prosperity, religious revival, and increased mobility. Tibetans have looked for better opportunities outside of Tibetan areas, and were drawn to Chengdu by its many allures. The Southwest University of Nationalities attracts more than 20,000 students, including ethnic Tibetans from Kardze, Qinghai, and the TAR. Chengdu is also a good place to go for medical treatment because it has Sichuan's best hospitals. It is, moreover, the main place for Han Chinese cadres previously stationed in the TAR to retire,²⁶ and it is increasingly also a favored retirement destination for wealthy ethnic Tibetan businessmen and middle- and high-ranking ethnic Tibetan officials. Chengdu is also a favorite seasonal refuge for eastern Tibetans who spend the summers on the Tibetan plateau but move to the milder climate of Chengdu for the winter. And if a Tibetan family can afford it, they will send their children to attend Mandarin-language schools in Chengdu, knowing that the education standards are better there. Apart from providing their children with education, the main reason for Tibetans to travel to Chengdu is to make money by starting a business, collecting donations, or finding a job. Finally, of course, it is *the* place to shop. According to one interlocutor, 60% of the people that one sees in these streets are businessmen and traders, whereas the remaining 40% of the people there are customers, including Han Chinese devotees of Tibetan Buddhism and foreign tourists. 240 245 250

In a city of 14.0476 million permanent residents, the Tibetan population accounts for a numerically negligible section of the population. Still, the Tibetan market in Wuhou is a well-known neighborhood. It is not easy to estimate the number of Tibetans living in Chengdu or in the Wuhou district, let alone the exact number of Tibetan businesses there or the inter- and intra-provincial movements that feed the Tibetan market in Chengdu with merchants and customers. Nevertheless, official statistics bear witness to the growth of Tibetan urban migration, although Sichuan province in fact is experiencing population decline.²⁷ There were 4010 Tibetans in Chengdu at the time of the 1990 census.²⁸ Ten years later, in 2000, the Tibetan population had tripled: 12,690 registered Tibetans out of which 2889 lived in Wuhou.²⁹ The 2010 census set the number of Tibetans at 32,332, of whom 3627 were registered in Wuhou.³⁰ According to the census, the *minzu* population in Chengdu accounted for only 0.9% (126,939 people) of the total population. Nevertheless, this was an increase by 67% of the *minzu* population as a proportion of the total population in Chengdu since 2000.³¹ The 2010 headcount revealed that the 32,332 Tibetans constitute the most prominent *minzu* in Chengdu followed by the Hui (20,898 persons), Yi (14,907), and Qiang (13,598),³² and also had the highest growth rate: the Tibetan population increased by 19,642 persons, the Yi by 10,801 persons, and the Qiang by 8465.³³ Similarly, the present *minzu* population of Wuhou district is 15,212 persons, of which the largest *minzu* group is the Tibetans (3627 persons), followed by Hui (2621) and Yi (1955).³⁴ 255 260 265 270

The numbers given above are based on the censuses that include everyone who was on site during the headcount. Compared to the annual surveys, these census data provide the best official data that we can access because they include temporary migrants and because they provide information on the ethnic breakdown of the neighborhoods in Chengdu.³⁵ Population counts in Chengdu and Wuhou district are challenged, however, like everywhere in China, by the numbers hidden in the ambiguous category of 'floating population' (Chi: *liudong renkou*). In fact, estimates of the number of Tibetans living in Chengdu today can range anywhere from the registered 275

32,332 to as much as ten times higher, which, according to colleagues in Chengdu, is probably closer to the real number of Tibetans living there. Permanent and floating ethnic minority residents in the city vary greatly, but the general trend is that the urban ethnic minority population is rapidly growing.³⁶ In Chengdu we see seasonal movements that include Tibetans from neighboring areas who go to Chengdu to spend the cold winters. Temporary movement to the city also characterizes those who go for education, for instance to the Southwest University of Nationalities. Upon completing their studies, they generally return to Tibet, where they are hired as government workers. Semipermanent or permanent movement is also common in Chengdu and includes high-level and medium-level cadres who buy property in Chengdu in order to live there after they retire. Tibetans' rural-to-urban and interprovincial movements may in many cases not be classified as migration, and their numbers will not appear in the annual surveys because neither the number of seasonal and temporary movements nor the number of permanent movements without registered household (Chi.: *hukou*) are noted. Most Tibetans in Chengdu – including all Tibetan interviewees in this survey – keep their *hukou* household registration in their hometown even if they have moved both their business and their family to Chengdu.³⁷

The estimates of floating Tibetans to Chengdu vary greatly in the different sources, from annual flows of 100,000 Tibetans in and out of Wuhou to 4,000,000 leaving Chengdu annually.³⁸ Regardless of the actual number of Tibetans coming and going, most estimates conclude that the majority come to Chengdu temporarily to do business or to study.³⁹ The survey of Tibetans' intra-TAR migrations presented by Tanzen and Ma supports this analysis,⁴⁰ but contradicts the observations of Iredale et al.⁴¹ In their study among migrants from Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet to Beijing, the small group of Tibetans is the only group in the study with a high percentage of legal migrants, that is, who are registered locally. They constitute a special group of government-sponsored movement in that they are enrolled students or work as officials. In Chengdu, however, a large proportion of Tibetans there must be defined as belonging to the floating population because they have left the place of their *hukou*, but have neither registered their *hukou* in the place of destination nor registered with the local police to obtain a work permit or a temporary residence permit.

Ethnic minority migrants without an urban *hukou* typically use their kinship, home-region networks, and personal connections when they come to the city, and since they do not have access to services, they tend to cluster and form enclaves that reinforce their culture and identity. Clustering presumably also has advantages for ethnic business formation. Although it is in the district of Wuhou where one will see most Tibetan-looking businesses and both Chinese and Tibetans therefore see it as Chengdu's Tibetan quarter, and although it will probably be the first port of call for them, most Tibetans coming to Chengdu do not reside in Wuhou. According to the 2010 census, only 11% of the 32,332 Tibetans in Chengdu are resident in Wuhou.⁴² Apart from Wuhou District with its 3627 registered Tibetan residents, which in fact constitute the most prominent *minzu* population in Wuhou district,⁴³ those who settle in and around Chengdu are attracted to the low housing prices in Dujiangyan (with 7062 Tibetans registered in the 2010 census), Jinniu District (3506), Pi County (3108), Shuangliu (3102), and Pujiang (southwest of Chengdu, with fewer than 3000 Tibetans),⁴⁴ where an increasing number of Tibetans have bought or rented property. Some wealthy Tibetans have established second homes in Chengdu, and even set up boarding houses to accommodate fellow Tibetans because most Tibetans can only afford to rent a room or crash with family and friends. Most accommodations and shops for rent are in fact the property of local neighborhood institutions

such as the Southwestern University for Nationalities or Han Chinese individuals who rent to Tibetans.

The Tibetan market has emerged from increased economic activity and residential clustering by Tibetan migrants in this neighborhood. This has influenced co-ethnic movements in increasing numbers, invading the area and encroaching on the neighborhood. The neighborhood developed a special Tibetan atmosphere due to the ethnicity of the people living and trading there, and the ethno-religious goods displayed in the shop windows. With the prosperous development of the Wuhou Tibetan market, the government decided to recognize it, and an increasing number of merchants have set up business there. But when we probe more deeply into the growth of this market, we discover that many of the shops are not Tibetan. Han Chinese are also getting into the business of dealing with *minzu* goods. Thus, this study not only shows that Tibetan migration has led to the development of an ethnic minority market, but also suggests that the patterns of ethnic division within markets in Tibetan areas as observed by others are also reproduced in Chengdu.⁴⁵

Market infrastructure

The Tibetan market in Chengdu is famous among Tibetans coming from Ngaba and Ganze, and even all the way from the TAR. It is located in the city-center district of Wuhou, within the first ring road of Chengdu. The market is called Zang shi jie in Chinese and some Tibetans refer to it as Wuhouci, but Wuhouci is actually the name of the nearby tourist attraction: a temple complex from the dynastic period of the Three Kingdoms. Just to the east of the temple complex is another famous sight for tourists, Jin Li, the multiethnic ‘old street’, which is a newly constructed complex of narrow paths winding around food stalls, exotic crafts shops, fusion kitchens, and a Starbucks. It is folk life for the upper class assembled and displayed in colorful multiethnic regalia. Ethnic culture tourism is popular among the Han Chinese, and they are attracted to Jin Li, which is always packed with mostly Han Chinese tourists and visitors. It is also popular among Western tourists, some of whom I also spotted in the neighboring Tibetan market.

The Tibetan market in Chengdu consists of two intersecting streets: it is where Ximian Qiao Bystreet (Chi: *Ximian qiao henjie*) running eastward changes into East Wuhouci Street (Chi: *Wuhouci dongjie*) as it meets Wuhouci Bystreet (Chi: *Wuhouci hengjie*), thus forming a cross. It is this intersection and these streets that make up the market. There are also a few businesses situated on Wuhouci Boulevard (Chi: *Wuhouci dalje*), which is the street into which Wuhouci Bystreet ends. These intersecting streets are lined with shops displaying modern and colorful storefronts with signs written in Tibetan and Mandarin. The spacious pavements were never crowded when I visited, but I would run into groups of shoppers and pedestrians every few minutes: touring Tibetan *lamas* with their entourages passing by the market on their way home from visits to Chinese devotees; young students on their lunch break from the Southwest University of Nationalities; Han Chinese devotees of Tibetan Buddhism shopping for the paraphernalia necessary for them to practice their religion; mothers of Tibetan children going to school in Chengdu; monks and nuns encircled by family members looking to provide them with winter clothes; Tibetan businessmen from Lhasa replenishing their inventories; women wearing ragged Tibetan outfits, squatting on the sidewalk selling homemade strings of prayer beads; and spies in dark suits eavesdropping on your conversations with the shop clerk. The customers and the shopkeepers, their languages, the sounds, and the smells reveal that

this is not an exclusively Tibetan territory; it is a space for both Tibetan and Han Chinese, but with a distinct Tibetan atmosphere, a strong Eastern Tibetan presence, and predominantly Tibetan Buddhist religious goods for sale. 375

Because many Tibetans come to Wuhou, there is a demand for products that cater to Tibetan tastes. Apart from a few Muslim noodle stalls patronized by Tibetans, the market is packed with places to eat Tibetan style. I counted 74 enterprises dealing with food and drinks: in addition to a couple of kiosks and grocery shops, a few shops sell Tibetan products such as butter and instant butter tea, yak milk, and beef products. There are a number of teahouses and restaurants, be they simple tea stalls with a couple of tables and chairs on the pavement for guests to play *mahjong*, or big multi-floor restaurants serving Tibetan menus presented in three languages: English, Chinese, and Tibetan. Along with the shops selling ethnic minority goods, it is these enterprises that set the streets apart from other Chengdu streets. It is the most popular place for Tibetans to run errands, gather information, rest, or see a doctor, because several agencies and services are located there, such as government offices,⁴⁶ branch hospitals, and two colleges: Sichuan Economy and Business College and the Southwest University of Nationalities. 380 385 390

There is a great variety of businesses in this neighborhood, and my research deals with 472 enterprises whose storefronts face these streets. In my study I have chosen to treat the entire cross made up of the two streets rather than limit myself to the immediate vicinity of the intersection, because the market has outgrown the geographical area of the Ximian Qiao administrative unit (Chi.: *she qi*) that Chinese scholars and officials consider the official market. I have walked all the way to the end of the streets in all four directions, which allows me to add some 280 shops to the official count, which only treats the approximately 120 shops situated in the central intersectional area of the market. The distribution of the businesses that were visited in my survey is as follows: there are 203 shops on Ximian Qiao Bystreet, 63 shops on East Wuhouci Street, and 145 shops on Wuhouci Bystreet. I have categorized the shops according to what they sell, but in a few cases this was difficult. For example, in the cases when two different shops share a showroom, or when one shop specializes in very different kinds of products. For instance, *Dolma Kitchen Machines* also sold carpets; another vendor of religious goods also dealt in road construction gear; and several travel agencies shared their floor space with internet cafés or dealers in beads and charms. The overwhelming majority of the businesses, however, sell ethnic minority products (Chi.: *minzu shangpin*) that are purportedly connected to Tibetan culture. In addition to the 74 businesses in food and drinks, I counted 203 storefronts that predominantly dealt in such *minzu* goods. 395 400 405

Commodities 410

The commodities for sale at the market can be divided in two types: there is a market for goods favored by Tibetans, such as butter, stone beads (Tib.: *gzi*), and ceremonial scarfs (Tib.: *kha btags*) that are often sold wholesale. Within this kind of business, some shops are barely surviving and the shop floor tenants change frequently.⁴⁷ Other shops of this type, however, are doing very well and have grown into exclusive and successful enterprises, exporting their goods not only to Lhasa, Kathmandu, and Dharamsala, but also overseas. The second market is for products claiming to have a Tibetan origin, such as Buddha statues and carpets, and while the clientele comprises both Tibetans and Chinese, the targeted customer group is non-Tibetan. Both the small and untidy curio shops and the more fashionable Taiwanese enterprises with modern designs (Ikea meets Tibet) cater to this market. 415 420

The trade between Chengdu and Tibetan areas has followed a common pattern: ethnic minority goods from Tibetan areas were transported eastward and traded in Chengdu, and from Chengdu came basic necessities. This is obvious in the case of Tibetan family businesses that have a hometown workshop or an outlet in Lhasa, and a store in Chengdu. In their Tibetan shop they deal with inland goods and in the Chengdu shop they peddle Tibetan goods. This trade pattern has changed, as many so-called *minzu* goods are produced in factories situated outside of Tibet. The main sources of Tibetan *minzu* goods are Tibet, Nepal, Chengdu, and Shenzhen (Guangdong Province). You will also find goods produced in Beijing, Gansu, Qinghai, and Taiwan. Han Chinese are the main producers and dealers of certain goods for the Tibetan market, like ceremonial scarfs and prayer flags, and they run many factories and workshops with a long record of producing Buddhist paraphernalia. Many goods sold at the market are actually made in factories situated on the fringes of the city. Feng Min identified several factories in the surrounding counties of Qionglai, Dayi, Longquan, Shuangliu, Renshou, and Baijia that together produce 160 different kinds of *minzu shangpin* meant for the Tibetan market and sold in wholesale shops.⁴⁸

Most commodities come under the category of religious articles (Chi.: *zongjiao yongpin*), that is, items that can be used in religious activities. If they are not Tibetan Buddhist paraphernalia, at least they appear to be Tibetan, and they include prayer beads, carpets, incense, ceremonial scarfs, jewelry, prayer flags, prayer wheels, charms, religious texts, items for the Buddhist altar, religious images such as *thangkas* and statues, and decorations for monasteries. Many shops sell monks' clothes and bags, not only Tibetan style, but also Chinese. Jewelers – most of them Han Chinese – deal in corals and turquoise, artificial *gzi* stones from Taiwan, jade bracelets, gold and silver amulet boxes, finger rings, bracelets, pendants, and beads. Several shops specialize in monastic paraphernalia of a grand scale, such as gigantic statues, oversized candle holders, mandala offerings, prayer wheels, and huge golden spires and door knobs made for monasteries. Rich Buddhist devotees – Han Chinese as well as Tibetan, but also Tibetan *lamas* – buy these items and donate them to monasteries or temples; in other cases, several people from a village will come together and pool their money in order to buy a gift for their local monastery or *sangha*. Customers of such oversized Buddhist paraphernalia can also be the Tibetan hotel owner who wants to give his hotel a Tibetan atmosphere by installing a huge prayer wheel in the reception hall, the Tibetan company boss refurbishing the temple in his hometown, or the wealthy and virtuous Taiwanese real estate agent who is building an extravagant shrine in his successful company.

Buddhism is in fact the central theme of most shops, even when they do not specifically trade religious commodities. It is manifest in many shops in the form of an altar for offerings, a Buddha statue, or at least a framed picture with a ceremonial scarf around it. Commonly the image will be of local *lamas* like the famous Jigme Phuntsok (d. 2004), who has a large following in Chengdu and whose temple is located in Sertar County in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. I also saw pictures of the popular Tenth Panchen Lama (d. 1989) with ceremonial scarfs draped around his image, and in one shop a famous photo from his youth together with the present Fourteenth Dalai Lama. These manifestations of Buddhism are generally centrally located in a place where they will be seen, for example, high up on the wall facing the entrance. In the shops selling statues, there would be heaps of banknotes in front of the image or in the lap of a statue of Buddha in a meditative pose, a conspicuous display of the shopkeepers' or customers' faith. Other shops display their religious affinity so prominently that they become *de facto*

illegal temples. There are also shops acting as liaisons between monasteries in Tibetan areas, *lamas*, and their devotees. Quite a few shops are owned by monasteries or are affiliated with a particular *lama*, so it is here devotees can get news about their Buddhist teacher. One Chinese colleague with intimate knowledge of the market estimated that monasteries own 10–20% of all shops in the market. Monks have to be self-supporting and the monasteries have to be refurbished and redecorated, so in Wuhou they have set up their money-making ventures to secure the monasteries' survival and prosperity. When Tibetan masters pass through Chengdu on their way to Shanghai, Beijing, or Singapore to give Buddhist teachings, they usually visit these shops, and their devotees will be informed beforehand and go there to meet them.

When we take a closer look at the shops that mainly deal with *minzu* products, we discover that they sell accessories, religious items, and costumes that are advertised as being of Tibetan origin. One tailor shop run by a Han Chinese couple displayed belly dancing costumes, ethnic dresses, Tibetan opera outfits, and new variants of the traditional Tibetan dress, *chupa*. 'Tibetan women love them', the tailor explained when asked why he had altered the original Tibetan costume into a low-waisted skirt in shiny material. He proudly showed his models and explained how his creations were new products that enjoyed popularity among Tibetan women for their beauty and utility. Like many other *minzu* commodities sold at the market, the dresses were made outside of Tibet by non-Tibetans. When one probes into the origin of the goods, it becomes obvious that a commodity for sale at this market does not have to be made by a Tibetan in Tibet in order to be a Tibetan *minzu shangpin*.

Ethnicity

I have already mentioned that Han Chinese have set up businesses in this market, and if we pry into the ethnicity of all shop owners, we get a nuanced picture of the market. We can easily label the enterprises according to *minzu* since we know the ethnicity of the owner and the staff. From the dataset produced in 2010, it is clear that businesses owned by Han usually hire Han staff, the Hui hire Hui staff, and in Tibetan enterprises, we mostly see ethnic Tibetans working as assistants and employees.⁴⁹ Most of the Tibetans who run businesses in the market are from the adjacent Ngaba (Chi.: Aba) and Kardze (Chi.: Ganzi) Tibetan autonomous prefectures or elsewhere in Sichuan Province. Of the 79 Tibetan business owners for whom we have information about their hometowns, only 12 are from the TAR, and only one from Qinghai. They hire Tibetans to work for them, but it is not uncommon for Tibetans dealing with Buddhist icons and carpets to also hire Han Chinese for certain tasks in their workshops,⁵⁰ believing that they are diligent workers. For example, Tibetan-owned enterprises that have statue-making workshops in or around Chengdu and showrooms in Wuhou will often prefer to hire Tibetans from their native hometowns, but also employ artisans from Nepal.

Among the 401 shops in the survey, more than half of them, 229, are actually owned by Han Chinese. There are a few businesses run by men of Hui nationality, but with the exception of one Hui business trading in Tibetan carpets made in his family workshop in Ningxia, the other Hui businesses are noodle stalls that have been there for years. Only 98 businesses were owned by ethnic Tibetans. The ethnicity of the owners of 89 shops in the survey was unknown. The observation that non-Tibetans dominate business in the area is seconded by several studies in Tibetan areas. In Hu's study on private businesses and migrant entrepreneurship in Lhasa from 1980 to 2000, we see that the growth of a

migrant-dominated sector closely follows the changes in economic policy in the beginning of the 1980s that led to accelerated chain migration as people from one place of origin followed in the footsteps of successful migrants from their native region (Chi.: *laoxiang*). Since the 1990s, Hu relates, there has been a gradual increase in the number of businesses in Lhasa and a relatively stable share of migrant businesses (i.e., non-Tibetan businesses), which outnumber native Tibetan businesses by a ratio of 2:1. In short, the Lhasa business sector is migrant-dominated.⁵¹ Similarly, Wang has studied the noninvolvement of Tibetans in business and argued that only 20% of the businesses in Tibetan areas in China are owned by ethnic Tibetans.⁵² The access to capital, Chinese language abilities, understanding of Chinese business culture, and good connections to political and economic elites that many Han Chinese enjoy all represent potential limitations and disadvantages that discourage many Tibetans from trying their luck outside of the traditional market.⁵³ This is also conspicuous in Chengdu's Tibetan market, where it is mostly Han Chinese who deal in non-*minzu* goods.

The businesses that are 100% monopolized by Han Chinese are the six real estate agencies, three banks, many grocery stores, hardware stores, transportation and construction work, communications, funeral shops, lottery-ticket sale agents, and dry cleaning enterprises. Twenty-one shops sell fashionable clothing, with a few of them featuring famous international brands such as Adidas, Nike, and Li Ning. Twenty-six businesses can be categorized as health and beauty enterprises such as private clinics, pharmacies, dental clinics, hairdressers, beauty salons, and massage parlors. Another 20 businesses deal with photography development, printing, and photocopying, and specialize in printing religious and devotional pictures. All of these businesses are in Han Chinese hands. The Tibetans stick to dealing in *minzu* goods like they always have, occupying a niche in which the non-Tibetan interviewees in my study feel disadvantaged. The Tibetan interviewees, however, spoke of their Buddhist faith, intimate knowledge of Tibetan culture, and their entrepreneurial personalities as driving forces and positive qualities that had made their businesses successful. They do what they know and what they are good at, and in the Tibetan market in Chengdu they seem to have an advantage. As many as 70 of the 98 shops run by Tibetans trade in Buddhist paraphernalia, specialize in making Buddhist clothing, or are established printing presses dedicated to printing Tibetan-language literature. Additionally, but not analyzed here, there are 74 Tibetan-run restaurants, as well as a number of Tibetan-owned inns and transportation services (not counted in the survey). Apart from three Tibetans who are trying their luck selling electronic butter tea machines, there are no Tibetans who have successfully entered the new markets of, for example, consumer goods, real estate, communications, and other modern commodities in Wuhou. These are niches occupied by Han Chinese.

The common perception is that Tibetans have been able to keep to their own niche, dealing in traditional goods such as religious paraphernalia and relying on their own networks for distribution. Several studies confirm this observation of an ethnic division of the market. Yeh has analyzed the Sichuan Han Chinese dominance in vegetable production,⁵⁴ and Fischer has described how Muslims have taken over the previously Tibetan-dominated market of wool manufacturing and how Han Chinese migrants to Tibetan regions exclude Tibetans from their commercial niches by creating and maintaining strong home-region networks.⁵⁵ Likewise, Hu documents how certain trades in Lhasa are kept in the hands of non-Tibetan regional networks or ethnic groups.⁵⁶ The residents in Lhasa, Hu explains, know from whom to buy the different products and services: Han Chinese occupy several niches, but each niche tends to be dominated by a network from a

different region of China: tailors are from Zhejiang, hairdressers are from Sichuan, goldsmiths from Fujian, and so forth. The Tibetan-run businesses deal in goods like music cassettes and perfume smuggled from India, Buddhist scriptures, prayer flags, and other traditional goods. But even within this cohort, Hu has detected regional specializations: Lhasa Tibetans deal with religious paraphernalia and Sichuan Tibetans with antiques.⁵⁷ Whereas the Tibetans in Hu and Salazar's study are firmly in control of the market for traditional products, non-Tibetan migrants dominate the fast-growing, nontraditional fields that demand entrepreneurs with good personal contacts (Chi.: *guanxi*), home-region networks (Chi.: *laoxiang*), and access to distribution channels.⁵⁸ Similar observations are made by Wang,⁵⁹ who noted that small Tibetan-owned enterprises trade in Tibetan goods and cultural artifacts such as handicrafts, ornaments, and Tibetan medicine, or are restaurants, hotels, and bars.

In the survey of businesses in the Tibetan market in Chengdu presented here, it is noticeable that Han Chinese, in addition to dominating the market for modern commodities and services, have also entered the traditionally Tibetan sphere of Tibetan cultural goods and products. This becomes clear from the map below, which shows both the distribution of shops dealing with *minzu* products and the shop owners' ethnicities. The boxes in the first row indicate the ethnicity of the shop owners, whereas the boxes in the second row of markings indicate those shops that deal in religious commodities (Figure 1).

From the data produced in the survey of 401 businesses, we know that 229 shops are owned by Han Chinese and 98 by Tibetans. Of these, Tibetans run 70 businesses dealing in Tibetan *minzu* goods. This number, however, is nearly matched by the number of Han Chinese businesses dealing in *minzu* goods (67). Thus, while the market for *minzu* products entices Tibetans with dreams of making money in urban China, it has also attracted non-Tibetans. These include the Han Chinese tailor who moved his shop to the Tibetan market when his old location was demolished; the Hui carpet dealer who exited the Lhasa market after riots in 2008; the Han Chinese woman

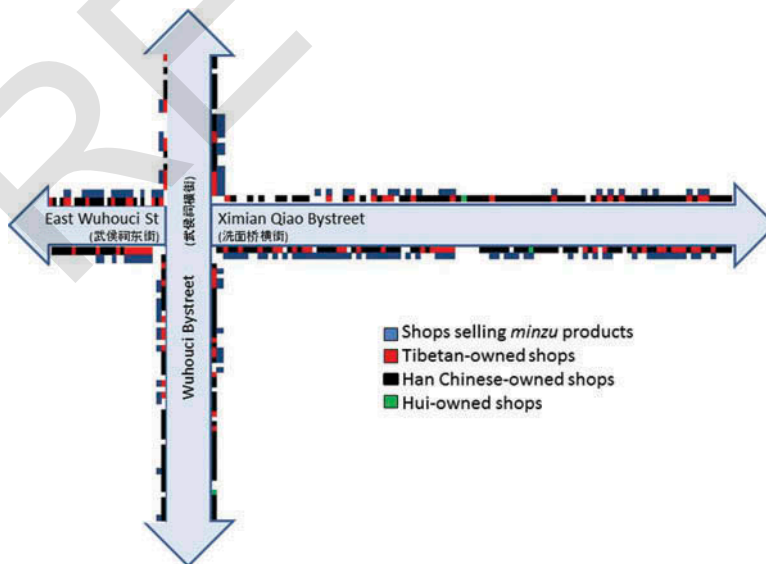


Figure 1. The Tibetan market infrastructure: the intersection of ethnicity and commodity.

who converted to Buddhism, started to wear Tibetan clothing, and opened a shop selling Tibetan icons; and the petty merchant who set up curio shops replete with ethnic crafts. In an interview the latter explained that he was attracted by the potential profits and hopes to capitalize on the Tibetan clientele and the ethnic economy that has grown in Wuhou since the Tibetans started to do their business there. The woman said she wants to be close to ethnic Tibetans, who are seen as bearers of spiritual knowledge. The tailor and the carpet dealer were both forced to relocate, but recognized the potential for clients and profit in Wuhou. It comes as no surprise that non-Tibetans have entered the market competition since, after all, the market is situated in an otherwise totally Chinese environment. Their presence in the market does not mean, however, that the Chinese are now outcompeting Tibetans or taking over their shops. In fact, the survey shows that most businesses established within the past three years are in Tibetan hands, indicating that shops assigned to new caretakers or newly established shops most likely have Tibetan ownership. All businesses that are more than 10 years old deal in Tibetan *minzu* products, and half of them are owned by Han Chinese. Now that we know that the shops are not run by Tibetans only, and the products are not necessarily made in Tibet or by Tibetans, can we still say that it is a Tibetan market?

Conclusion

I will highlight a few observations in order to ascertain the Tibetan-ness of the market. As has become evident through the development of my argument, the Tibetan market in Wuhou has encroached on the surrounding neighborhood as it has grown and attracted an increasing number of Tibetans and Han Chinese. But when we probe more deeply into the ethnic dimension of this market, we discover that many of the shops sell goods not made in Tibet or by Tibetans, and that many shops are not run by Tibetans. Thus, the results of this study remind us of the tendencies revealed in Tibetan areas where ethnicity is a significant aspect in the private business sector. The relationship between ethnicity and the market has been investigated in the studies by, for instance, Hu and Wang, both of which revealed not only a migrant-dominated business sector – that is, dominance by non-Tibetans in Tibetan areas – but also an ethnic division within the market.⁶⁰ Whereas these studies point to migrant-dominated market participation in Tibetan areas, the present article has dealt with Tibetan migrants who have moved into Han Chinese territory and have created a market of their own. Moreover, this study has revealed that non-Tibetan merchants are also involved in the *minzu*-goods business and are able to profit from the Tibetan ethnicity brand.

Nevertheless, this market is indeed Tibetan, and I will suggest that the ethnic dimension of the market is not to be found in the ethnic origins of the shop owners alone. First, the market is a commercial vernacular landscape occupied, appropriated, and used by Tibetans for trading Buddhist paraphernalia. For Krase, commercial vernacular landscapes ‘play a major role in defining the ethnic quality ... of city neighborhoods’.⁶¹ Tibetan ethnicity is inscribed into this particular neighborhood and is a key marker setting the neighborhood apart from the urban China that surrounds it. Not only do the spatial semiotics testify to this, but also the history of the market, the commodities for sale there, and the expectations of the visitors – whether they are Tibetan merchants and shoppers, Han Chinese merchants and Buddhist devotees, or foreign tourists. Second, the market was created by Tibetan migrants. It was not designed by the local government,

although it might appear that way in retrospect since Wuhou district has been designated Chengdu's multicultural district. Chinese accounts also acknowledge the district's Tibetan ownership; Feng, for example, underscores that it was ethnic minority entrepreneurs and their ambitions that built the market.⁶² Pushed by the marginalization observed in Tibetan areas and pulled by the promises of the city, these Tibetans have moved temporarily, seasonally, or permanently to Chengdu. They go there to do their business, get an education, go to the hospital, and do their banking.

Apart from making ethnicity, *minzu*, a defining aspect of the market, my study testifies to the importance of highlighting the strong connection between mobility and markets in order to explain the development of a Tibetan market in urban China. In the context of peasant migrants to urban China, Solinger has pointed out 'the general importance of the introduction of two new and powerful forces, markets and migration', and how the newness that entered the city when migrants and markets were liberated after 1978 led to a 'sudden license for capital, markets and movements'.⁶³ Although Solinger did not have a marketplace like the one in Chengdu in mind, the Tibetan market is the result of the meeting between migration and market, and its spinoff effects. The structural opportunities created by the state in the form of policy changes in post-1978 PRC, which showed leniency toward movement, making money, and religious belief, permitted Tibetans to create the market and, over the course of three decades, transform it into a *minzu shangpin* central.

The Tibetan atmosphere in the neighborhood has only grown stronger and the Tibetan stores more prosperous, to the extent that the Tibetans are perceived by their Han Chinese neighbors as a collective that knows how to make money. 'Tibetans love trade!' one of my interlocutors exclaimed when asked about the origin of the market. His friends, who had joined us for tea, all had stories up their sleeves that in their minds revealed the intimate link between money-making ventures and Tibetans, whom they interpreted as constituting an ethnic economic collective. In particular, they continued, the eastern Tibetans were cunning businessmen. I wonder if we in this case are perhaps witnessing the transformation of their *minzu* categorization from a political collective identity to an *economic* collective identity, as has been suggested by the Comaroffs in a different context.⁶⁴ As follows, I am not suggesting that any depoliticization of ethnic identity (similar to Ma Rong's model, in which ethnic identity categories are dissolved⁶⁵) is taking place among my Han-Chinese interlocutors. Instead, their statements regarding Tibetans in Wuhou as a collective suggest that, like the Comaroffs, the market is perceived as the future of ethnic culture, a way to create an economy out of ethnicity. This is a fascinating thought and I am throwing it out here although it is premature to speculate, based upon the limited material presented in this article, on whether Tibetan ethnicity can become the foundation of an economy. This study only documents the market composition anno 2010–2013, and real conclusions as to the dynamics of this market and the advantages of ethnicity can only be made through comparative analyses over several years. In any case, this article can be read as a cautious step toward highlighting the economic dimension of *minzu* categories.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks go to Professor Dr Yang Minghong at Sichuan University for arranging my stays in Chengdu and Professors Feng Min, Xu Jun, and Zhou Xingwei who generously shared their insights on Tibetan migrants in Chengdu. I would also like to thank the twenty plus participants who

attended a workshop on Tibetan businesses and ethnic enclaves that I organized at Sichuan University on 18 October 2013. Gratitude is also due to Tashi Rabten and Guan Jie for dedicated assistance, and Huang Yangmin, Sonam Yangsom, Nyima Sonam, and Choephel Tsering for their help in transcribing and translating interviews. Particular acknowledgment is due to Dr Zhang Yanhong, who worked as my invaluable assistant at a time when she was busy completing her PhD thesis and commencing her career as a researcher at the School of Economics, Yunnan University of Nationalities. I am grateful to Brian Donahoe for his careful language editing, Andrew M. Fischer for sharing his insights on migration and statistics, and Andreas Gruschke for helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. My deepest thanks to my husband, Peter Bager, who helped develop statistical material and maps of the market, and who always supported and facilitated my fieldwork. Finally, I thank Jingjing and Jesper for friendship and support in Chengdu.

Funding

This work was supported by the Danish Council for Independent Research|Humanities and the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

Notes on contributor

Trine Brox is an associate professor in modern Tibetan studies at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She studied social science at the University of Tromsø (Norway) and tibetology at the University of Copenhagen, where she also received her PhD degree in 2009 with the thesis ‘The Enchanted Gift of Democracy: Imagining and Negotiating Democracy in the Tibetan Diaspora’. She has published several articles about contemporaneous issues in Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora. Current research topics are migrant urban landscapes, model minority citizens, and the entanglements of Buddhism and economy.

Author’s postal address: Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Karen Blixens vej 4, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark.

Notes

1. I use the term ‘ethnographic Tibet’ to refer to the three indigenous Tibetan regions (Tib.: *chol kha gsum*) of Utsang, Kham, and Amdo, which are predominantly inhabited by Tibetan-speaking people. Hence, ‘ethnographic Tibet’ covers the political entity Tibet Autonomous Region, which roughly corresponds to the central Tibetan province of Utsang, along with the eastern Tibetan provinces of Kham and Amdo that were split up and incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan in 1965.
2. Elliott, “Case of the Missing Indigene,” 202.
3. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms*.
4. Bellér-Hann and Brox, “Introduction.”
5. See the studies by Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*; and Krase, *Seeing Cities Change*.
6. See, for instance, Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture*; and Makley, “Minzu, Market, Mandala.”
7. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*
8. As so succinctly described by Yeh, Tibetan studies are politically sensitive and the researcher is subjected to the same surveillance and self-discipline as the Tibetan society that is under investigation (Yeh, “Open Lhasa”). At every stage of this investigation, I have been careful when gathering information and dealing with people. I often felt that there were spies everywhere at the market. My attention to this was regularly heightened by uncomfortable incidents during fieldwork when, for example, one or more men would enter a shop while I was visiting, which immediately made the shopkeeper fall silent and incited an eerie atmosphere.
9. Tibet Information Network, “The Wuhou District.”
10. They include Bian, “Chengshi hua”; Feng, “Zangzu jingshang”; RGTFP, “Cong zai neidi de”; Wu, “Chengdu Zangzu”; and Xue, “Chengshi duo minzu.”
11. Yeh and Henderson, “Interpreting Urbanization in Tibet.”
12. Ibid. Refer also to the studies by Fischer, “Population Invasion”; and Fischer, “Population Foundations.”

13. Fischer, "Population Invasion"; and Fischer, *Urban Fault Lines*.
14. Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 97–125.
15. Fischer, "Labour Transitions." 740
- AQ7 16. See for instance Fischer, *Urban Fault Lines*; Fischer, "Population Invasion"; Hu, *Little Shops*; and Yeh, "Tropes of Indolence." Another excellent and in-depth study of development in Tibet, also interpreted as urbanization and resulting in intra-urban inequality, is the study by Yeh, *Taming Tibet*. Of particular relevance here are Chapter 3 on Sichuan migrants to Lhasa and the discourse on 'quality development' (Chi.: *suzhi*), and Chapter 745 6, which presents a history of the urbanization of Lhasa and an analysis of administrative urbanization.
17. Iredale et al., *China's Minorities*.
18. Several studies on Han Chinese migration into minority areas raise these concerns. Relevant works include Clarke, "Movement of Population"; Fischer, *Urban Fault Lines*; 750 Fischer, "Population Invasion"; Hansen, *Frontier People*; Hu, *Little Shops*; and Ma and Tanzen, "Temporary Migrants." Han Chinese and Tibetan rural–urban migration in the TAR is also treated in the work of Tanzen and Ma, "Temporary Labor Migration."
- AQ8 AQ9 19. Goldstein et al., "Going for Income."
20. Childs et al., "An Entrepreneurial Transition?" Their survey conducted in three Tibetan 755 villages also revealed that business is the second most profitable activity after 'driving own vehicle'. However, business is not the most common non-farm income source; it ranks sixth after manual labor, skilled labor, driver for others, drive own tractor, and government job (Goldstein et al., "Going for Income").
21. I have extracted all the information presented here regarding the history of this market from 760 interviews and conversations with persons close to the market and from one Chinese-language case study of the market by Xue, who interprets its history through the lens of the official Chinese narrative of the city as a harmonious multiethnic meeting place (Xue, "Chengshi duo minzu").
22. For more details, see Iredale et al., *China's Minorities*. 765
23. Potter, "Belief in Control."
24. Kapstein, "A Thorn."
- AQ10 25. Smyer Yü, *The Spread*.
26. See note 11 above.
27. Most registered Tibetan households in Sichuan are found in Sichuan's autonomous 770 Tibetan areas where the number of Tibetans has increased steadily. For a thorough explanation of population distribution and transitions, see Fischer, "Population Foundations."
28. Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui jingjisi, 353. Since Wuhou District was created in 1991, we 775 have no number on its Tibetan population in 1990 to compare. Most Tibetans in Chengdu in 1990 lived in Dongcheng District (1206 registered Tibetans) in western Chengdu, Dujiangyan City (666), and Xicheng District (615) in east Chengdu (*ibid.*)
29. Guojia tongjiju renkou he shehui keji tongjisi, 674.
30. DERAC, "Chengdu shi renkou shu." Colleagues in Chengdu estimate that the number of 780 Tibetans living in Chengdu and Wuhou District is as much as 10 times greater than the official number.
31. DERAC, "Chengdu shi renkou minzu."
32. DERAC, "Chengdu shi renkou shu."
33. DERAC, "10 Nianjian Chengdu."
34. DERAC, "Quanshi shaoshu." 785
35. I am grateful to Andrew M. Fischer, who has explained the differences between the annual surveys and the 10-yearly censuses to me. See also Fischer, "Population Foundations."
36. This has been documented by, for instance, the study by Iredale et al. of migrant movements to Beijing – one of the most migrant-attractive cities in China. See Iredale et al., *Contemporary 790 Minority*.
- AQ11 37. The household registration system has been discussed in relation to Tibetan migration and migration into Tibet by Hu and Salazar, "Ethnicity, Rurality and Status." Their argument that *hukou* status predominates over ethnicity has been aptly criticized by Yeh, who contends that the urban Tibetan poor who possess an urban *hukou* are not hierarchically situated above Han

migrants who possess rural *hukou*; rather, the Tibetans perceive that they are being swamped by these migrants (Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 116). 795

38. A local government agency in Chengdu operates with the very high number of 4 million Tibetan floaters. This number is excessive and is calculated by the way of counting the number of tickets bought for the buses bound for Tibetan areas. Thus, a person commuting every week will be counted as 104 persons, and non-Tibetan passengers will also be counted. Another Chinese study has estimated that the number of unregistered Tibetans living in Chengdu is between 150,000 and 200,000, and that Tibetans constitute between 5% and 6.67% of the total floating population in Chengdu (RGTFP, "Cong zai neidi de"). According to yet another study, the annual floating population to Wuhou is 300,000, with the majority of these being Tibetans who go there temporarily to do business or to study (Bian, "Chengshi hua"). Regardless of the relative accuracy or inaccuracy of these estimates, the number of Tibetans in Chengdu with a *hukou* is most likely quite small, whereas the actual flow of Tibetans who visit the neighborhood is much larger. The inflow of Tibetans to Chengdu has led Professor Xu Jun at Sichuan University to suggest that Chengdu has become the fourth province of Tibet and is a Tibetan favorite for 'concentrated urban living' (Xu Jun, personal communication). 800
39. See, for instance, Bian, "Chengshi hua." 805
40. Ma and Tanzen, "Temporary Migrants."
41. Iredale et al., *Contemporary Minority*; and Iredale et al., *China's Minorities*. 815
42. See note 32 above.
43. See note 34 above.
44. Ibid.
- AQ12 45. Examples include Hu, *Little Shops*; and Wang, *Tibetan Market*.
46. Apart from the People's Government Liaison Office of the TAR in Chengdu, there is also a People's Government Liaison Office of the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Chengdu, established in 1979, as well as hospitals and housing. 820
47. Hu and Salazar have also pointed to the high mobility of business people in their study of Lhasa private businesses. Among the newcomer migrant businesses there is a 60–70% departure rate within the first couple of years after arrival in Lhasa. Hu and Salazar, "Market Formation and Transformation," 176–7. 825
- AQ13 48. Feng, "Zangzu jingshang."
49. This trend is also confirmed in the Lhasa study by Hu and Salazar, "Market Formation." In contrast, Andreas Gruschke has called my attention to his findings in Sanjiangyuan Department Store in the Tibetan town Yulshul (Chi.: Yushu) in Qinghai. The majority of the 138 traders whom he met there were Han Chinese who for the most part (105 out of 138) employed at least one local Tibetan as shop clerk in order to accommodate a predominantly Tibetan clientele. See Gruschke, *Nomadische Ressourcennutzung*, 354. 830
50. See Zhang, "Carpet Worlds."
51. Hu, *Little Shops*, 58–9. 835
52. Wang, *Tibetan Market*, 18.
53. Ibid.
54. Yeh, *Taming Tibet*.
55. Fischer, *Close Encounters*.
56. Hu, *Little Shops*, 71. 840
57. Ibid.
58. Hu and Salazar, "Market Formation."
59. Wang, *Tibetan Market*.
60. Hu *Little Shops*; and Wang, *Tibetan Market*.
61. Krase, "Seeing Ethnic Succession," 79. 845
62. See note 48 above.
63. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship*, 8.
64. See note 2 above.
65. Elliott, "Case of the Missing Indigene"; Ma, "Reflections on the Debate."

Bibliography

- Bellér-Hann, Ildikó, and Trine Brox. "Introduction." In *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*, edited by Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, 1–28. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2014. 850
- Bian Quanqin. "Chengshi hua shiye xia san zaju de Zangzu yu Hanzu de guanxi: yi Chengdu minzu yongpin yitiao jie weili" [The Relationship of Dispersed and Mixed Tibetan and Han Chinese from the Perspective of Urbanization: A Case Study of the Ethnic Items Street in Chengdu]. NN, 2011. 855
- Childs, Geoff, Melvyn C. Goldstein, and Puchung Wangdai. "An Entrepreneurial Transition? Development and Economic Mobility in Rural Tibet." *Himalaya* 30, no. 1 (2010): 51–62. Accessed December 5, 2013. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol30/iss1/13> 860
- Clarke, Graham E. "The Movement of Population to the West of China: Tibet and Qinghai." In *Migration: The Asian Experience*, edited by Judith M. Brown and Rosemary Foot. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. 860
- Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnicity, Inc.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 865
- DERAC [Department of Ethnic & Religious Affairs of Chengdu, *Chengdu shi minzu zongjiao shi wu ju*]. "10 Nianjian Chengdu shi zengjia renkou chaoguo 5000 ren de shaoshu minzu" [Minority Population Increases by More Than 5,000 People Over 10 Years in Chengdu]. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.cdmzzj.gov.cn/getRollInfoAjax.do?method=newsDetailInfo&articleId=1278>
- DERAC [Department of Ethnic & Religious Affairs of Chengdu, *Chengdu shi minzu zongjiao shi wu ju*]. "Chengdu shi renkou minzu jiben gaikuang" [Overview of Chengdu Minorities]. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.cdmzzj.gov.cn/getRollInfoAjax.do?method=newsDetailInfo&articleId=1202> 870
- DERAC [Department of Ethnic & Religious Affairs of Chengdu, *Chengdu shi minzu zongjiao shi wu ju*]. "Chengdu shi renkou shu wei ju qian shi wei de shaoshu minzu" [Top Ten Minority Populations in Chengdu]. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.cdmzzj.gov.cn/getRollInfoAjax.do?method=newsDetailInfo&articleId=1277> 875
- DERAC [Department of Ethnic & Religious Affairs of Chengdu, *Chengdu shi minzu zongjiao shi wu ju*]. "Quanshi shaoshu minzu renyuan fenbu" [The Distribution of Minorities in the City]. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.cdmzzj.gov.cn/getRollInfoAjax.do?method=newsDetailInfo&articleId=1281>
- Elliott, Mark. "The Case of the Missing Indigene: Debate Over a 'Second-Generation' Ethnic Policy." *The China Journal* 73, no. 73 (2015): 186–213. doi:10.1086/679274. 880
- Feng Min. "Zangzu jingshang liudong renkou dui duoyuan wenhua chengshi de gongxian: 'minzu yongpin yitiao jie' de diaocha yu sikao" [How Mobile Tibetan Business People Contribute to the Multicultural City in Chengdu: Research and Reflections on the Ethnic Items Street]. *Xizang Yanjiu*, no. 2 (2005): 103–114. 885
- Fischer, Andrew M. *Close Encounters of an Inner-Asian Kind: Tibetan-Muslim Coexistence and Conflict in Tibet, Past and Present*. London: Development Research Centre, 2005.
- Fischer, Andrew M. "Labour Transitions and Social Inequalities in Tibet and Xinjiang: A Comparative Analysis of the Structural Foundations of Discrimination and Protest." In *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*, edited by Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, 29–68. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2014a. 890
- Fischer, Andrew M. "Population Foundations of Marginalization in Tibet." *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China: A Study in the Economics of Marginalization*, 83–126. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014b.
- Fischer, Andrew M. "'Population Invasion' Versus Urban Exclusion in the Tibetan Areas of Western China." *Population and Development Review* 34, no. 4 (2008): 631–662. doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2008.00244.x. 895
- Fischer, Andrew M. *Urban Fault Lines in Shangri-La: Population and Economic Foundations of Inter-Ethnic Conflict in the Tibetan Areas of Western China*. London: Crisis States Programme, 2004. 900
- Goldstein, Melvyn C., Geoff Childs, and Puchung Wangdai. "'Going for Income' in Village Tibet: A Longitudinal Analysis of Change and Adaptation, 1997–2007." *Asian Survey* 48, no. 3 (2008): 514–534. doi:10.1525/as.2008.48.3.514.
- Gruschke, Andreas. *Nomadische Ressourcennutzung und Existenzsicherung im Umbruch Die osttibetische Region Yushu (Qinghai, VR China)*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2012. 905

- Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui jingjisi; Guojia tongjiju renkou tongjisi. *Zhongguo minzu renkou ziliao, 1990 renkou pucha shuju* [Tabulation on China's Nationality (Data of 1990 Population Census)], Vol. 3. Beijing: China Statistical Publishing House, 1994.
- Guojia tongjiju renkou he shehui keji tongjisi; Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui jingji fazhansi. *2000 nian renkou pucha Zhongguo minzu renkou ziliao* [Tabulation of Nationalities of 2000 Population Census of China], Vol. 1. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House, 2003. 910
- Hansen, Mette Halskov. *Frontier People: Han Settlers in Minority Areas of China*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.
- Hu Xiaojiang. "The Little Shops of Lhasa, Tibet: Migrant Business and the Formation of Markets in a Transitional Economy." PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003. 915
- Hu Xiaojiang, and Miguel A. Salazar. "Ethnicity, Rurality and Status: Hukou and the Institutional and Cultural Determinants of Social Status in Tibet." *The China Journal*, no. 60 (2008): 1–21.
- Hu Xiaojiang, and Miguel A. Salazar. "Market Formation and Transformation: Private Business in Lhasa." In *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region*, edited by Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer, 166–189. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006. 920
- Iredale, Robyn, Naran Bilik, and Su. Wang. *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education and Ethnicity in China*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001.
- Iredale, Robyn R., Naran Bilik, and Fei Guo. *China's Minorities on the Move: Selected Case Studies*. Armonk: Sharpe, 2003.
- Kapstein, Matthew T. "A Thorn in the Dragon's Side: Tibetan Buddhist Culture in China." In *Governing China's Multi-Ethnic Frontier*, edited by Morris Rossabi, 230–269. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. 925
- Kolås, Åshild. *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition: A Place Called Shangrila*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Krase, Jerome. "Seeing Ethnic Succession in Little Italy: Change Despite Resistance." *Modern Italy* 11, no. 1 (2006): 79–95. doi:10.1080/13532940500492340. 930
- Krase, Jerome. *Seeing Cities Change: Local Culture and Class*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.
- Lin, Jan. *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Ma Rong. "Reflections on the Debate on China's Ethnic Policy: My Reform Proposals and Their Critics." *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 2 (2014): 237–246. doi:10.1080/14631369.2013.868205. 935
- Ma Rong, and Tanzen Lhundup. "Temporary Migrants in Lha Sa in 2005." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* no. 4 (2008). Accessed February 2, 2014. <http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/#jiats=/downloads/>
- Makley, Charlene. "Minzu, Market, and the Mandala: National Exhibitionism and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China." In *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism, and the Chinese State*, edited by Tim Oakes and Donald S. Sutton, 127–156. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. 940
- Mullaney, Thomas S. *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 945
- Potter, Pitman B. "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China." *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 317–337. 950
- RGTFP (Neidi Zangzu liudong renkou yanjiu keti zu [The Research Group of Tibetan Floating People]). "Cong zai neidi de Zangzu liudong renkou zhuangkuang kan Han Zang minzu guanxi: yi Chengdu shi zangzu liudong renkou zhuangkuang wei li" [Han-Tibetan Ethnic Relations from the Perspective of Tibetan Migrants in the Interior: A Case Study of the Situation of the Mobile Tibetan Population in Chengdu]. *Zhongguo Zang Xue* [China Tibetology] 2 (2003). 950
- Smyer Yü, Dan. *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China: Charisma, Money, Enlightenment*. London: Routledge, 2011. 955
- Solinger, Dorothy J. *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Tanzen Lhundup, and Ma Rong. "Temporary Labor Migration in Three Cities of the Tibet Autonomous Region." In *China's Internal and International Migration*, edited by Li Peilin and Laurence Roulleau-Berger. New York: Routledge, 2013. 960
- Tibet Information Network. "The Wuhou District: A Tibetan Enclave in Chengdu." *TibetInfoNet Update* March 24, 2009. Accessed February 2, 2014. <http://www.tibetinfo.net/content/update/143>

- Wang Shiyong. "Tibetan Market Participation in China." PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2009.
- Wu Bijun. "Chengdu Zangzu yimin shehui ronghe de xianzhuang yu yingxiang yinsu fenxi" [An 965
Analysis of the Factors Influencing the Social Integration of Tibetan Migrants in Chengdu].
Journal of the Party School of Province-Level of Sichuan Province Committee of CCP 3 (2010):
84–87.
- Xue Bowen. "Chengshi duo minzu shequ hexie minzu guanxi de goujian: yi jianguo 60 nianlai 970
Chengdu shi Zang wenhua yongpin yitiao jie de fa zhan wei li" [The Construction of
Harmonious Ethnic Relations in Multi-Ethnic City Communities: A Case Study of the
Development of the Tibetan Cultural Products Street in Chengdu Since the Founding of New
China]. In *Di si jie quanguo minzu lilun yanjiu sheng xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji* [Proceedings
of the Fourth Postgraduate Symposium on Ethnic Theory], Vol. 10, 2009.
- Yeh, Emily T. "An Open Lhasa Welcomes You": Disciplining the Researcher in Tibet." In *Doing 975
Fieldwork in China*, edited by Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen, 96–109. Honolulu: University
of Hawai'i Press, 2006.
- AQ21 Yeh, Emily T. "Tropes of Indolence and the Cultural Politics of Development in Lhasa, Tibet." 980
Annals of the Association of American Geographers 97, no. 3 (2007): 593–612. doi:10.1111/
j.1467-8306.2007.00565.x.
- Yeh, Emily T. *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*.
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Yeh, Emily T., and Mark Henderson. "Interpreting Urbanization in Tibet: Administrative Scales and 985
Discourses of Modernization." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 4
(2008): 1–44. Accessed January 20, 2010. [http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/#jiats=/](http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/#jiats=/downloads/)
downloads/
- AQ22
- AQ23 Zhang, Tracy Y. "Carpet Worlds: The Construction of a Commodity Hierarchy and the Politics of 990
Difference in Lhasa." In *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in
Socialist China*, edited by Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, 98–126. Copenhagen: NIAS
Press, 2014.